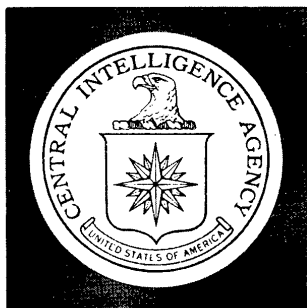


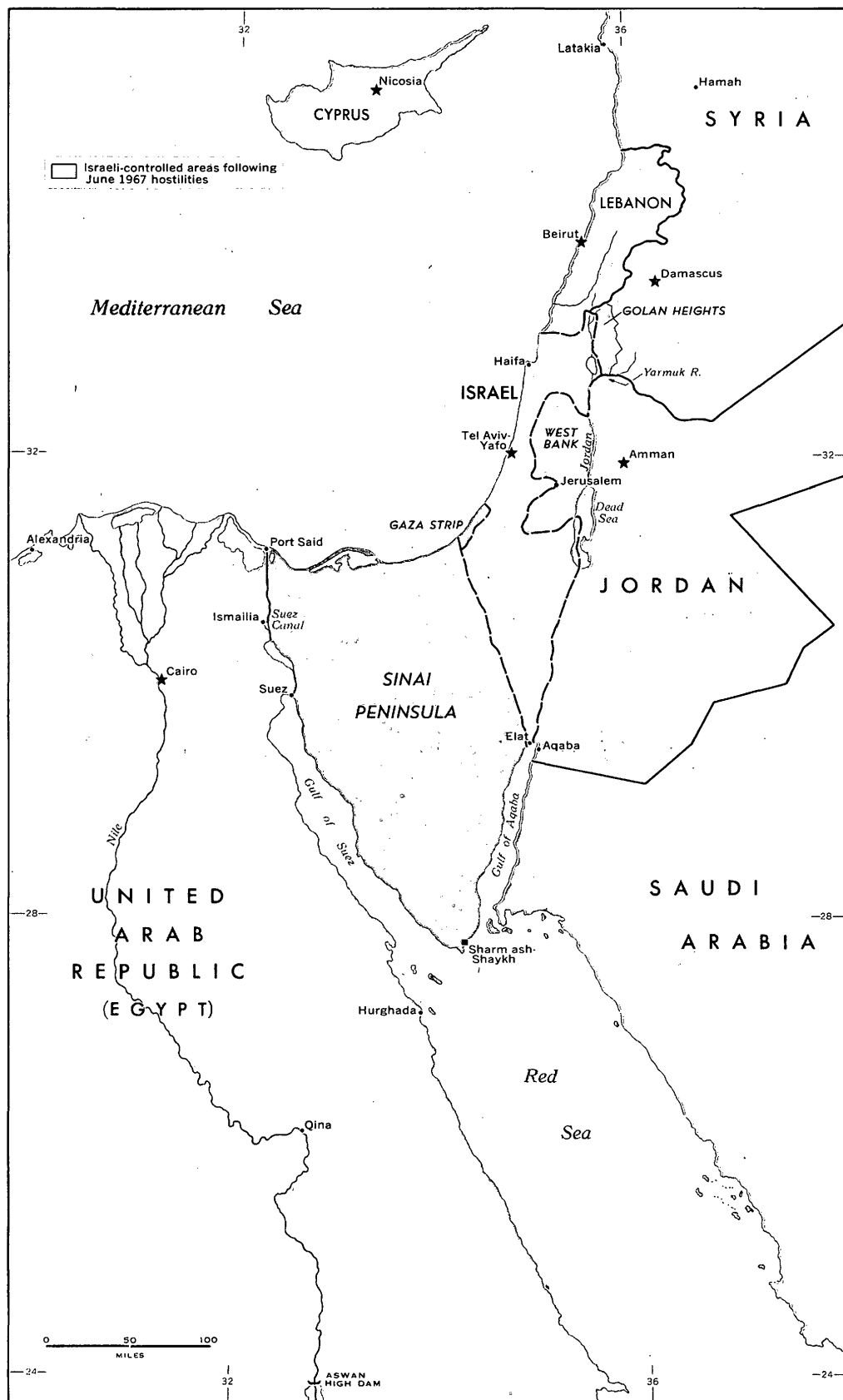


The President's Daily Brief

23 April 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

24 April 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
23 APRIL 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

In Beirut troops are still patrolling city streets and guarding key buildings including American University. The state of national emergency declared yesterday is to last until 27 April. In a clash between armed Palestinian refugees and security forces near Sidon yesterday, three refugees were killed and some 30 wounded. In a subsequent clash in Beirut, three more demonstrators were killed and 25 people wounded. There was another incident at Barr Illyas, to the east of Beirut near the Syrian border.

The disturbances have been triggered by the government's attempts to bring the fedayeen under better control. (Central Intelligence Bulletin, 24 Apr.)

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In a lengthy conversation yesterday with Bergus, the senior US diplomatic representative in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad claimed the military were deeply concerned over the possibility of an imminent Israeli attack on Port Said. The Egyptian military also insist, according to Riad, that Israel is making extensive use of "rockets." The foreign minister described these as weapons having a range of between 5 and 15 kilometers--not "pinpoint weapons" but "area weapons" to supplement artillery.

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EUROPE

Manac'h, the new French ambassador to Peking, says he found De Gaulle in a somber mood during his farewell call on the General Tuesday. When Manac'h asked De Gaulle about the

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referendum, De Gaulle replied that this might be their last meeting in Elysee. He said if the referendum results were not what he wanted, he would resign "immediately."

On the same day, veteran politician Guy Mollet told Manac'h that he was "absolutely sure" that the "no" vote would win Sunday.

De Gaulle will take small comfort from the latest results of Le Figaro's poll, which today for the first time has 53% of those who have made up their minds voting against the government's reform proposals. About one-third of those polled are still undecided, however.

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There is nothing significant to report in any other areas.

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

The Israelis have once again accumulated a sizable backlog of scores to settle with the Egyptians. They always carefully calibrate their moves to balance the account, but it is difficult to predict the lengths to which their retaliation will go this time. The current state of affairs along the Suez Canal, however, is reminiscent of the situation last fall when the Israelis finally made a helicopter raid deep into Egypt.

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VIETNAM

There is further evidence that Hanoi is prepared to wait out some new US effort to break the current impasse in Paris. Ha Van Lau told the French on 18 April that he knew of no plans for Le Duc Tho to return soon and discounted the idea that the North Vietnamese Politburo member would

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come back with new instructions designed to get the ball rolling. Lau's line was that Tho would return only after our side had opened a way to progress in the talks.

Soviet Ambassador Zorin gave even clearer evidence of Hanoi's current waiting game in a talk with Ambassador Lodge on 21 April. He said that Moscow was not going to act as a go-between unless the US came up with "something new." He claimed again that the Vietnamese Communists were ready to move into "serious" talks, but only if the process started with new steps from the US side. Zorin bluntly asserted that if we did not take the first steps ourselves, "there is no way out."

Zorin refused to say what Hanoi might do if the US withdrew some troops. He continued to insist that we must do "something" if we wanted progress, but he did not specify what. In the past he has suggested everything from unilateral troop withdrawal to pressuring Saigon to "reform" itself.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Press reports that the Soviets may have canceled all or part of the military phases of the Moscow May Day parade could be correct. Western attachés report that the military equipment assembled at Moscow's Central Airport for the parade has not been seen since the night of 8-9 April. The equipment--including missiles, tanks, and artillery--had arrived on 3 April. Night rehearsals for the parade should

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have begun in Red Square this week, but so far only dis-mounted marching elements have been seen.

One possible explanation for what may be a sharp break with tradition could be Moscow's wish to play down the military segment of the parade as a way of promoting a peaceful image. The seeming change of signals between 3 and 9 April suggests that the reason for the switch in plans--if indeed there has been one--may lie in some fairly fast breaking development.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

NIGERIA

The federal government is claiming the capture of Ojukwu's capital at Umuahia. We have no confirmation yet. If the claim proves accurate, this would be less than a decisive point in the civil war. Ojukwu had already moved his capital elsewhere. Biafran forces are intact, and the arms supply airfields are still functioning. Arms are pouring into Biafra at a very high rate, in fact.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the federal side is gaining in its war of attrition. Even Ojukwu's backers in Paris seem to think the Biafrans will be overrun in the next few months, although they (and we) believe Ojukwu's Ibo tribesmen will then revert to guerrilla warfare.

KOREA

Examination of the full text of Pyongyang's first official statement on the EC-121 incident shows a generally cautious and defensive stance. The North Koreans clearly have been playing for time in which to assess US intentions. The defensive tone of the statement suggests that North Korean leaders are well aware of their weak international position and are fully conscious of the hazards in any further military provocations on their part.

The North Koreans make an attempt to link the EC-121 with the Pueblo affair, but the weakness of their case is evident in their failure to cite a precise location for the

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alleged intrusion of the US plane. The omission of details contrasts with the elaborate attempt to "document" the Pueblo's violation of North Korean waters.

In an obvious attempt to play on foreign uneasiness regarding US intentions, the statement claims there is no "guarantee" that US flights "will not intrude again." The statement further seeks to cast doubt on US intentions by warning that the US will exploit any North Korean defensive reaction as a pretext to "commit full-scale attack" which may lead to another "total war" in Korea.

The general posture and deployment of North Korean forces and air defense units is consistent with a decision to lie low for the time being.

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Seoul appears to be trying to keep in step with the US.

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